

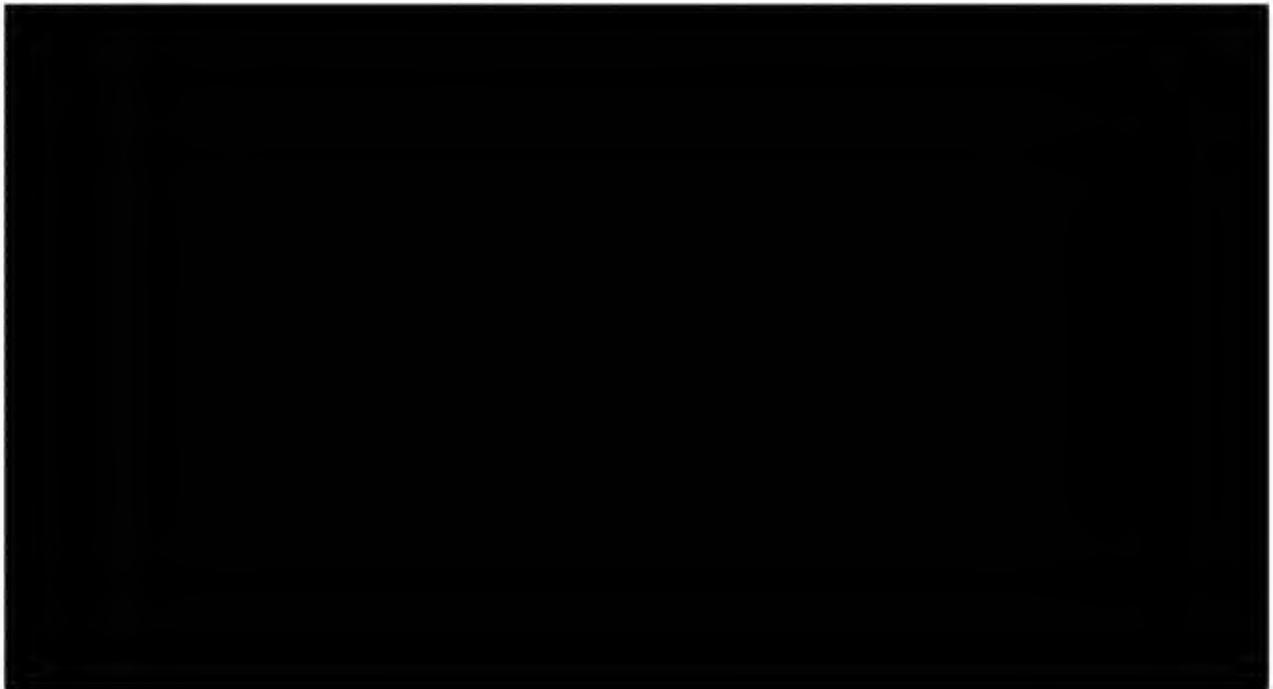
~~SECRET SENSITIVE~~

29 October 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: October 29 Meeting of the "Indochina Steering Group"

1. The major portion of the meeting, which lasted one hour and ten minutes, was taken up by a briefing by [redacted] on the DCI's trip to the Far East. He started by talking about a meeting that he had in Honolulu with Admiral McCain who had just returned from Cambodia. What he said was merely a rehashing of McCain's cables, i.e., that McCain was very impressed with Lon Nol, his courage, ability, and staying power. As another over-all comment, [redacted] mentioned that the Director was highly pleased with the CIA's organization and performance throughout the Far East area.



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[REDACTED]

b. Laos: The Director came away with the impression that we might well be in for a rough winter in the north of Laos. Vang Pao's men are weakened and spread thin, and are probably unable to withstand a serious enemy effort. The whole question remains whether the enemy is willing to make that effort.

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c. Vietnam: [REDACTED] said that they had learned little new in Vietnam. The Director met with Thieu and Ky, of course, as well as other leaders, and what came out was confirmation of the view that they went in with, i.e., that there are two soft spots in the Vietnamese situation. These are the economy and inflation and the political weaknesses of the government as now constituted. The war, however, seems to be going very well indeed with the South Vietnamese newly confident and gaining some successes.

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[REDACTED] mentioned that they had spoken with General Clay, new 7th Air Force commander, who is talking about mounting a new interdiction effort on four choke points. He plans to concentrate on these choke points almost to the exclusion of the rest of the 7th Air Force's previous efforts. DIA is coming to SAVA on Tuesday to brief them on this new effort. [REDACTED] invited anyone at the steering group session to come to the briefing, if they wanted. (I recommend we see if [REDACTED] and perhaps [REDACTED]

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wish to attend the briefing.) The Director had decided to send [REDACTED] out to the field to talk to Clay since Clay was new on the job and had expressed some distress at what he said were the differences between CIA's view of the efficacy of the interdiction effort and the 7th Air Force

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view. [REDACTED] leaves tomorrow on a trip that will take him to CINCPAC, [REDACTED] and then Saigon to discuss the whole question with General Clay. [REDACTED] had talked with Brig. General John, new J-2 for 7th Air Force, here in Headquarters recently. Paul was impressed with John as an intelligent and seemingly sensible man, but remarked that once such officers get out to the field their views often undergo a seachange.

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d. The DCI is going to Georgia to talk with Senator Russell. The ostensible purpose of this trip is to brief

Russell on his Far East journey, but more important is the effort the Director is going to make to impress Russell with the necessity for stopping Congress from passing, in any form, the Fulbright Amendment which would prevent many of our operations in North Laos.

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2. [REDACTED] said that OER had recently sent Laird a memo on enemy force structures. This had been asked for by Laird and was a retrospective look at the situation. While discussing this, [REDACTED] noted that Laird was extremely sensitive these days on reporting about Vietnam and Indochina in general. [REDACTED] said that Laird had called him over the weekend to complain about a CIB (and Developments in Indochina) piece which talked about the antiaircraft artillery fire from North Laos. Laird had somehow gotten the mistaken notion that we were saying that this antiaircraft fire on American planes was coming from North Vietnam. This was easily cleared up, of course, since the piece had stated specifically it was from North Laos and there was a map showing it was from North Laos. The point of this discourse was to make clear how sensitive Laird is and [REDACTED] went on to say the reasons for this are clear: Laird would like to see the war end as soon as possible and he is under instructions from the President to reply with force against North Vietnam any time there is an action from North Vietnam against American planes or personnel.

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25X1A 3. [REDACTED] noted that OER has just completed a paper, a post mortem, for the DCI to give to PFIAB. It is on its way to R.J. Smith for review. Inter alia, [REDACTED] said that it was a first-rate job; one of the best he has seen in a long time.

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25X1A 4. [REDACTED] noted that the [REDACTED] memo that was discussed at the Board yesterday has been rewritten and is about to be given to the Director with a note saying that this was discussed by the various components in the DDI, but there has been no effort to coordinate it. This lead to some discussion, mostly by [REDACTED] and myself. Both of us had been under the impression that this memo was killed because there had been considerable disagreement between OCI and OER analysts and ONE about how the paper was organized and what it was saying. [REDACTED] said that all these things had been taken care of. He hadn't thought there was this much disagreement and anyhow it was not being put forward as a coordinated paper. The upshot of the discussion was an agreement later by [REDACTED] to at least give us a copy before it went to the Director. [REDACTED] said that the paper had been very

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much rewritten to take into consideration points made by OCI and OER and that he felt we would not be unhappy with the final results.

25X1A 5. There was a short discussion of the status of the ceasefire study. [REDACTED] said that the terms of reference presented by the NSC staff was thought by others in the White House and the State Department to have gone too far. The terms, however, are now being reworked and will be distributed later today.

25X1A 6. [REDACTED] reported on the status of NSSM-99. The political group has held most of its meetings and the draft will be finished tomorrow. He said there was little difficulty beyond what is normal for these operations. The intelligence group is meeting on its draft today. The whole thing is supposed to be finished sometime next week and they expect to meet the deadline.

25X1A 7. I reported that there was still no indication when [REDACTED] would be coming to Washington, or, in fact, if he indeed would be coming. I noted that we had prepared a series of questions covering the Cambodian part of a debriefing and that we had learned that the DDP desk here had earlier sent to the field a large number of questions concerning Chinese activities. The desk did not know which of these questions the field had been able to ask [REDACTED]. They are now attempting to find out and would tell us as soon as possible which questions had not been asked and which questions the field felt would be fruitful to follow up in Washington. As soon as we get their status report, we will combine the Chinese questions with the Cambodian ones now in hand and submit them. Everyone seemed happy with this.

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[REDACTED]
Chief, Far East Division

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Rather than simply rehash old data and restate well-developed con-

clusions (held by the entire community), we propose that a "fresh look at the Chinese role in SEA" focus on the Chinese connection with the arms deliveries through Sihanoukville,

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[redacted] treating this problem in its political rather than its economic context. Such a memo could touch briefly (in a paragraph or so) on any new evidence relating to such perennial problems as the road in Laos, reports of Chinese presence in Indochina and so forth. It would then attempt to relate all this evidence to general Chinese policy toward SEA

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One problem with this proposal is that OER's [redacted] are still

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being processed and will not be in useable shape for another week. Once we are able to go through them we may discover that there is not much of a story

insofar as the Chinese are concerned; certainly we already know--and have

reported in some detail--the outline of the Chinese involvement. If worst

come to worse, however, we can fall back on a paper that would set forth

our prime conclusions about Chinese policy in SEA, a review of recent evidence

at the end of all sorts, and a restatement of our conclusions. The former course seems preferable, however. Given the state to play in OER, we would need six weeks

to separate the Sihanoukville question

from preparing some

Begn preparing some questions and requirement